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Spring 2018

www.indexa.org

Issue 121

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for the enhancement of amateur radio, worldwide peace, and friendship

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Temotu Province DXpedition—H40GC 2017

By Stan Vatev, LZ1GC

Temotu Province, Santa Cruz Islands group (H40) in Pacific area is a very sought-after destination by many radio amateurs around the World! In 2016 and early 2017, Temotu Province (H40) occupied 30th place in the CLUBLOG list for the most wanted country. It is currently in 46th place and is still needed by many radio amateurs worldwide, especially on SSB. The H40GC DXpedition 2017 was my second activation of this rare country. My first activation was from Lata, Nendo Island (IOTA OC100) between 4 October to 17



H40GC Radio Shack

October, 2016. Deciding to return to Temotu for a second activation was made easier as there were fewer unknowns! Additionally, this time I had a serious commitment besides the HF activation of this country. I wished to carry out a humanitarian mission under the auspices of INDEXA and with the generous participation of CDXA & CDXF, Kontrax Ltd - Bulgaria and Andy, LZ2HM. I would like to recognize the individual and corporate sponsors, amateur clubs, associations and organizations that sponsored me before the expedition even began and who were also participants in the humanitarian mission. I am thankful to all.

In October 2016 during the H40GC DXpedition 2016, I had meetings with teachers and students from the only high school in Temotu Province—JCP College—located on Nendo Island. About 400 students are learning in this school. So on the spot I got to know their problems and their needs. As early as 2016 I was convinced that the best way to help these boys and girls is to provide them with one or two laptop computers and other

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inside... WAZ QSL Credits now available via Logbook of the World!

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school supplies such as notebooks, pencils and pens. Such are luxuries in a province where the unemployment rate approaches 90 percent of the population. This makes it difficult for the students to buy even simple supplies. The school had not a single computer available! I think that helping young people and investing in them is the best thing that can be done for a country and its people because our future belongs to the younger generation.

Also, in October 2016 I had meetings with the head official and officers of the local provincial office for disasters and accidents. They also did not have even a laptop computer to help with their protection of the population living on the various islands belonging to Temotu Province. So, I was aware of what we radio amateurs could do to help the people of Temotu. My view of helping Temotu inhabitants met with the understanding and support of INDEXA, under whose patronage this humanitarian mission was finally accomplished.

I write about all of this because my understanding is that it is not enough to travel and activate on radio amateur bands at various rare destinations around the world, but that we have to leave something of us there by doing something good that the locals can remember! This will also popularize our wonderful hobby.

The organization and preparation of the H40GC DXpedition 2017 took about 6 months. During these six months, I purchased the required airline tickets, received a renewal of the H40GC and H44GC licenses (from 27 June 2017 - 26 June 2018), booked a room for my stay at Lata Motel on Nendo Island and prepared the antennas and the technical equipment necessary for the expedition. Every day during those six months I was doing something in preparation. Even when I was at work or on weekends and walking in the nearby mountain, my thoughts were on what I had to do for the expedition so I would not miss something.

On 24 September 2017, my trip to Nendo Island, Temotu Province in the Pacific began with a 3-hour flight from Sofia (Bulgaria) to Heathrow, London (England). I had 20kg of hand baggage and two checked bags—each weighing 23kg. After a 5-hour stay at Heathrow Airport, a 13-hour flight from London to Changi Airport, Singapore followed. In Singapore, the same plane was loaded with fuel, and the trip continued (8 more flight hours) to Sydney, Australia. From there, I immediately took a domes-

tic flight operated by QANTAS Airways to Brisbane (Australia). At 09:30 on 26 September 2017 local time, I was at the International Airport in Brisbane.



Stan, LZ1GC at International Airport Brisbane, at the night before the flight to Solomon Islands

The next leg of my journey was to be from Brisbane to Honiara, Solomon Islands (H44) on the next day. The hotels in Brisbane are very expensive (over 100 EUR per a night), at least for people with my budget! So I decided to stay at the Airport and repack my luggage to meet the various baggage limits imposed by different airlines.

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The airport in Brisbane is equipped with many luggage scales that helped me to organize my luggage to minimize any overweight charges. I packed my bags and paper boxes all night. All of my pockets were full of cables and different things needed for the DXpedition.

On September 27, 2017, after a 4-hour flight with Solomon Airlines from Brisbane to Honiara, I arrived on the Solomon Islands. The following two days in Honiara were used to get the originals of the H40GC and H44GC licenses. I was honored to visit the local telecom ministry (TCSI) to meet and talk with Mr. Aaron Hopa—local manager of the ministry—and get my license.



.Getting my all-important license from Mr. Aaron Hopa at local Telecom (TCSI) in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Considering Mr. Aaron Hopa as a good friend, I surprised him with a wonderful gift for his wife—Bulgarian perfume of rose oil. The meeting with Mr. Hopa was very useful because he helped me with my purchase of two laptops (the donation to Temotu Province) by directing me to the best local computer shop.

On September 29, 2017, the day before my flight to Lata, Temotu Province, I visited the management of Solomon Airlines. It occurred to me to talk to someone of the leadership to seek free shipping for the donations I had purchased. Having explained to them the purpose of my visit, a nice young woman told me that I should discuss my proposal with Mr.

Colin Sigimanu—Manager Commercial of Solomon Airlines. So I did! Mr. Sigimanu was very business-like, and after a brief discussion—a conversation in which I included a brief introduction to our hobby—he responded favorably to my request, assuring me that he would take care of the matter. On leaving, he gave me his business card and said, **"If you have any problems with Solomon Airlines employees, show this business card. It will help you."** At the time this sounded exaggerated, but his business card really opened doors. Twice I found that showing this card helped resolve issues that surely would have caused me conflict.

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Above, boarding my plane bound to Lata, Nendo Island from Honiara.

Below, arriving at Lata Airport with all my gear, at last!



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On 30 September 2017 at 12:30 local time, the small 36-seat Solomon Airlines airplane landed at Lata Airport, Temotu Province after a 1 hour 40 min flight from Honiara. I was very happy because I was again on Temotu (H40) and in a few hours H40GC would be back on the air.

The Chief of the Provincial Disaster Management Office of Temotu Province—Mr. George Tego—anticipated my airport arrival with a service car. I was quickly taken with my baggage to Lata Motel where I had a reservation. Mr. Tego also had previously arranged for three to four local people to immediately assist with the erection of the 160/80/40 m bands vertical antenna. The next activity was the installation of the radio shack and initial antenna testing. After several adjustments to the tuning box, I started working 40m CW.



With prearranged help, up went the big vertical . .



. . . . followed the necessary “tweaking”.

On 30 September 2017, at 08:38 GMT, H40GC was back on the air. The first contact was with VK3GA. After 2 to 3 minutes the PILE UP grew ever larger. H40GC—a rare DXCC entity was on the air. On the second day, I installed a multi-band ground plane antenna for 40 meters to 6 meters, including the WARC bands. In the following days until the end of the H40GC activity, despite the extremely poor propagation, I did my best to maintain a good QSO rate. The statistics for the operation show I managed to do it.

I tried to spend as much time as possible on the air—18 to 20 hours per day. During the night hours I worked 160/80/40 or 30m and during the day on high bands - 20/17/15/12/10. I worked all modes—CW, RTTY and SSB. With minimal pauses for some sleep, food, internet and antenna repairs, H40GC made nearly 18,000 contacts from 08:30 GMT on 30 September to 12:00 GMT on 25 October 2017! Unfortunately, a problem with the linear amplifier on 30 meters on the 10th day of the operation deprived me of the opportunity to realize at least another 1,500 QSOs on this band.

A few words about the propagation during H40GC activity—EXTREMELY poor propagation! Nevertheless, I managed to use the small windows of better propagation when available on different bands to give many radio amateurs the chance to make multi-band contacts with Temotu (H40). More QSO's

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could have been made, but I was also engaged with the humanitarian mission of this expedition and that also cost me time and effort.

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned that I had a vision of what humanitarian mission could be accomplished during the H40GC DXpedition 2017 so that it would remain a lasting memory of the local population and help them effectively.

On 6 October 6 2017 while visiting the local Provincial Disaster Management Office, I donated one new, fully equipped HP laptop. Mr. George Tego accepted this donation with great excitement and gratitude. Only a few minutes later he began working with the new computer. (See below.)



Then we celebrated together!



I want to highlight the fact that the three employees working for this important and responsible unit are Temotu residents who daily work for the benefit of their brethren and the local environment of the province. Their work is often connected with travels to Reef Island and other islands of Temoto Province, so I am sure that this donation will help them carry out their daily activities.

The main humanitarian activity during the H40GC DXpedition 2017 was intended for the local, and only high school—JCP College. At this school 400 students are progressing from grade 1 to 7 per their local education system. In order to qualify for this school, they must first have completed a primary school of grades 1 to 4. JCP College is located on Lata, Temotu Province, and draws students from various locations on a distant part of Nendo Island, accessible only by motorboat. The journey from Lata to there is 40 minutes in one direction.

The JCP College visit was planned and coordinated with the College's management for 11:00 on October 12, 2017. In order to be safely transported to the college, I made contact with the Chairman and the Mayor of Nendo Island. I told them that I needed their help and cooperation. It turned out that the Mayor is the custodian of JCP College and he is also the chairman of his council. He directed that I be allowed to use a motor boat owned by the municipality. The Chairman and the Mayor of the island were fascinated with the forthcoming donation to JCP College and said that they were impressed by this humanitarian action. I gave credit to the sponsors, INDEXA, CDXA & CDXF and Kontrax Ltd of Karlovo, Bulgaria. The donation to JCP College consisted of one new HP laptop including accessories: laptop bag, extended mouse, flash RAM, 400 notebooks, 400 pens, 400 pencils, folders, markers, sharpeners and other school supplies.

The motorboat trip to the JCP College was easily accomplished although the ocean was not very quiet this day. After my arrival at JCP College a meeting was held with students and teachers at the local church. The meeting began with the performance of the Temotu Province anthem by the students. I will remember this moment forever—the students standing and singing the hymn, myself and the teachers standing also, standing still and listening to this brilliant performance. It was really impressive!

Having introduced the students as to the purpose of my visit, the college director gave me the floor. In my

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The motorboat driver and Wesley deliver me by water taxi to the JCP College.

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address to the college students and teachers, I briefly explained what the donation was and that it was given under the auspices of INDEXA, with the generous participation of CDXA & CDXF, Kontrax Ltd., Andy (LZ2HM), and with the help also of all the clubs and organizations which sponsored my expedition to Temotu Province. I explained to them what our hobby is and that the purpose of radio amateur organizations and clubs is to not only support radio amateurs but also humanitarian activities in different parts of the world.



Preparing for the meeting, we had the computer and supplies ready for distribution.



JCP College students and I conclude our meeting with a Q&A session about life in my part of the world.

At this meeting I was asked many questions concerning our hobby and life and work in Bulgaria. I saw that my responses were interesting to those youngsters and students from JCP College. They asked me where Bulgaria is, what I have studied, whether I have a family, what is my job and many other things. Keep in mind that most of Temotu residents spend their entire lives without visiting another country. I answered their questions to the fullest. At the same time, I firmly told them that they must believe in the success and struggle to achieve more. I told them that it all depends on them to study and pursue a higher education leading them to a good profession, find a good job, to be able to work and visit other countries. I will remember forever those youngsters' interest in how other people and cultures live.

The meeting at JCP College lasted about 3 hours. When I left with the motorboat back to Lata, there followed an unforgettable friendly send-off. With the voices ringing, "Stan, come again here", the students did not hide their satisfaction and sympathy to me. After setting off on the boat, I heard their voices for a long time over the water wishing me good-bye!

Returning to the Lata Motel, I continued to work on the air. I did not need any rest because the meeting at JCP College was an exhilarating experience for me. By prearranged plan the H40GC DXpedition

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2017 had to finish on October 20, 2017. My return to Bulgaria had to take place after a series of 5 flights starting with a flight from Lata, Temotu Province to Honiara, Solomon Islands. This first flight had to be at 1 PM local time on October 21, 2017. The night before the flight, I worked on 160 meters. My last QSO was at 14:20 GMT with WL7E.

After going QRT I spent all night dismantling the antennas and packing luggage for my upcoming trip. The next morning, while expecting the taxi to take me to Lata Airport, I was told that because a eruption of the volcano Tinakula, my flight to Honiara was canceled. At this point, the uncertainty was before me. When would there be a flight? There was also a danger of my missing the other four flights to Europe and Bulgaria. I was worried about my job, my family, and about my limited funds at the end of the expedition. There were no banks and ATMs on the island. I was relieved to be among friends, people I knew from the previous year. I believed they would not leave me in trouble. I was most worried for my job. I have had this work for 38 years, and I understood that a delay of more than 10 days would not be good for me. I managed to get in touch with my relatives and my colleague at work and received permission to continue my leave.

I was more relaxed now! My only concern remained—when will there be a flight to Honiara. The first two days after the flight was cancelled, I visited Solomon Airlines' local office 3 to 4 times a day, hoping to find out that there would be a flight on the next day. Alas, because of the continued eruption of the Tinakula volcano, flights were impossible. Not knowing when there was to be a flight, I decided to erect the 160/80/40m antenna and continue to work on these three bands. So, I continued H40GC activity until 12:00 GMT, 25 October. Just a few hours before my flight to Honiara on October 26, 2017, I dismantled the antenna again and fast packed my luggage.

Finally, 26 October 2017, a little after 3 PM local time, the Solomon Airlines plane from Lata to Honiara landed at the Honiara Airport. I was even more relaxed now, realizing that the nightmare after the volcano eruption and the canceled flights was nearly over.

I immediately decided to visit again Mr. Colin Sigimanu, who, you'll recall, I met before my trip to Lata, Temotu Province. My idea was ask for his assis-

tance with my missed return flight from Honiara to Brisbane by Solomon Airlines. It turned out that Mr. Colin remembered me! After explaining to him that the humanitarian mission had been successful, I briefly discussed with him the problem of my missed 5 flights back to Bulgaria. I will remember this man with good feelings. Understanding my problem, Mr. Colin ordered his subordinates immediately to include me in the list of passengers traveling the next day from Honiara to Brisbane. He told me that a first class hotel paid for by Solomon Airlines will be provided for me in Brisbane.

Thank you, Mr. Sigimanu, for your goodness and humanity. We parted like good friends. Immediately after this meeting, I took a taxi to S.S.E.C. Guesthouse Honiara, where I spent the night and met Bernard (H44MS) and Mrs. Serah in charge of the accommodation there. My meeting with them was very friendly—like a meeting between old friends. It was an honor for me to meet personally with Bernard (H44MS). I want to point out that this is the same man, who since 1990, visits the Solomon Islands yearly for several months. During those more than 25 years he has performed IOTA activations from very rare islands belonging to the H44 and H40 DXCC entities.

Bernard (H44MS) and I quickly found a common language. The next morning, with his help, I contacted a British Airways representative via mobile phone who assisted my booking return tickets from Brisbane, Australia to Sydney, Singapore, London and Sofia (Bulgaria). Finally, after a long and tiring trip on October 30, 2017, I arrived successfully in Bulgaria, and on 31 October 2017 I was in my home—"my fortress"!

With the story of this DXpedition told, I would like to thank all the individual sponsors before and after the expedition that helped with the success of this expedition.

I thank all members of the GDXF which supported me after the Tinakula Volcano eruption on Nendo Island. Thanks are due for the support at this moment from Chris (DL5NAM), Rolf (DL7VEE), Uli (DM5EE), Sigi (DL6QW), Gerd (DL7VOG), Roland (DL7BA), Volker (DL7AUV), Helmut (DL5DSM), Wolf (DL8USA), Peter (DK2NG), Ulla (DF6QP) & Walter (DL8JS), Tom (DL1AMQ), Bernd (DL3GCB), Volker (DJ8QP), Tom (DK3DUA), Uwe (DK2ND),

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Tom (DJ6YX), Ed (EA8AXT), Ed (N4II), Bob (W9BF) and many others!

Thanks to all the Foundations, Associations and Clubs which supported me for this expedition: GDXF, SDXF, CDXA & CDXF, EUDXF, INDEXA, WVDXA, Lone Star DX Association, SWODXA, NODXA, KC5WXA - Jake McClain Driver Memorial Amateur Radio Club, WWDXC, Willimette Valley DX Club, LA DX GROUP, GM DX GROUP, Clipperton

DX Club, Mediterraneo DX Club and LYNX DX Group.

Thanks for the understanding and support from Spiderbeam, Clublog, ACOM Ltd Bulgaria and Kontrax Ltd.

Here's to new meetings on the air!

73— *Stan*, LZ1GC (H40GC)



WAZ Credits now Available on LoTW

On 2 April 2018, The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) and CQ Magazine announced that contact credits for CQ's WAZ Award will be available from ARRL's Logbook of the World (LoTW).

Standard LoTW credit fees and separate CQ award fees will apply. All recordkeeping for CQ Awards will still be performed by CQ's award managers. LoTW will serve as an additional source for confirmation of a contact.

Logbook of the World is ARRL's electronic confirmation system for amateur radio contacts. It provides a confirmation when both stations in a contact submit their logs to the system and a match between the logs is confirmed. LoTW has supported the CQ WPX Award program since 2012.

Those who had earlier worked a distant zone on the opposite side of the world through the auroral zone and received a LoTW confirmation but realized they still needed to send for a QSL card via the mail will surely applaud this event for the convenience it will bring.

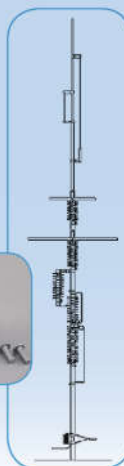
Another Notch on the DXCC Ladder for K4BVQ

Frank Dowd, K4BVQ, from Charlotte, NC is a long-time supporter of INDEXA and a supporter of ham radio in general. Frank is still active on the bands at 91 years of age and worked Kosovo, Z60A, for number 385! INDEXA's immediate past President Gary Dixon, K4MQG, communicated with Martti Laine (a former member of INDEXA's Board of Directors) about getting a Z60A QSL card in Frank's hands so he could savor his accomplishment. Martti expedited delivery of Frank's QSL card to Gary who presented it to Frank at his home. Martti told Gary that Frank was the first in North America to receive a paper Z60A QSL.

As an ARRL approved QSL Field Checker, Gary was able to check Frank's card and ensure an endorsement application was on its way to ARRL the same day. Below is a photo of Gary and Frank at the joyous occasion. Frank's smile is sure to be even wider when he is able to put his endorsement sticker on his DXCC certificate! Way to go, Frank.



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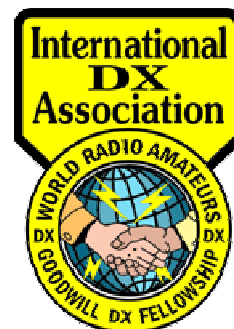
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